

traversed successively Kerman and Khorasan, Balkh and Badakhshan, whence they ascended the Panja or upper Oxus to the Plateau of Pamir, a route not known to have been since followed by any European traveller except Benedict Goës, till the spirited expedition of Lieutenant John Wood of the Indian Navy in 1838.* Crossing the Pamir highlands the travellers descended upon Kashgar, whence they proceeded by Yarkand and Khotan, and the vicinity of Lake Lob, and eventually across the Great Gobi Desert to Tangut, the name then applied by Mongols and Persians to territory at the extreme North-west of China, both within and without the Wall. Skirting the

to the conclusion that it was vague information given by some merchant whom he met in the course of his wanderings.

“Finally, apart from the fact that Baghdád, since its fall, was rather off the main caravan route, Marco so evidently travels east from Yezd and thence south to Hormuz, that unless his journey be described backwards, which is highly improbable, it is only possible to arrive at one conclusion, namely, that the Venetians entered Persia near Tabriz, and travelled to Sultania, Kashán, and Yezd. Thence they proceeded to Kermán and Hormuz, where, probably fearing the sea voyage, owing to the manifest unseaworthiness of the ships, which he describes as ‘wretched affairs,’ the Khorasán route was finally adopted. Hormuz, in this case, was not visited again until the return from China, when it seems probable that the same route was retraced to Tabriz, where their charge, the Lady Kokachin, ‘moult bele dame et avenant,’ was married to Gházan Khán, the son of her fiancé Arghun. It remains to add that Sir Henry Yule may have finally accepted this view in part, as in the plate showing *Probable View of Marco Polo's own Geography*,¹ the itinerary is not shown as running to Baghdád.”

I may be allowed to answer that when Marco Polo *started* for the East, Baghdád was not rather off the main caravan route. The fall of Baghdád was not immediately followed by its decay, and we have proof of its prosperity at the beginning of the 14th century. Tauris had not yet the importance it had reached when the Polos visited it on their *return* journey. We have the will of the Venetian Pietro Viglioni, dated from Tauris, 10th December, 1264 (*Archiv. Veneto*, xxvi. 161-165), which shows that he was but a pioneer. It was only under Arghún Khan (1284-1291) that Tauris became the great market for foreign, especially Genoese, merchants, as Marco Polo remarks on his return journey; with Gházán and the new city built by that prince, Tauris reached a very high degree of prosperity, and was then really the chief emporium on the route from Europe to Persia and the far East. Sir Henry Yule had not changed his views, and if in the plate showing *Probable View of Marco Polo's own Geography*, the itinerary is not shown as running to Baghdád, it is mere neglect on the part of the draughtsman.—H. C.]

* It is stated by Neumann that this most estimable traveller once intended to have devoted a special work to the elucidation of Marco's chapters on the Oxus Provinces, and it is much to be regretted that this intention was never fulfilled. Pamir has been explored more extensively and deliberately, whilst this book was going through the press, by Colonel Gordon, and other officers, detached from Sir Douglas Forsyth's Mission. [We have made use of the information given by these officers and by more recent travellers.—H. C.]

¹ Vol. i. p. 170 (Introduction).